



LONELY SUMMER: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' STRUGGLES FOLLOW IN FALL

The Lariccia Cultural Collaboratory Lab is where international students once held get-togethers and mixers such as International Coffee Hour before COVID-19. Photo by **Joseph Chapman/The Jambar**

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After many countries went on lockdown due to COVID-19, the majority of international students bunkered down on empty campuses. At Youngstown State University, many students chose to stay after campus shut down. The students who stayed shared their experiences and expressed uncertainties about fall.

Senior computer science major Aniket Singh stayed in Kilcawley over the summer.

"My country [Nepal] was in complete lockdown," Singh



The International Programs Office provides support for international students during the pandemic.

said. "I wasn't able to go back home, and it wasn't a safer option either."

According to Singh, other international students sparsely populated the dorms. The university arranged for food distributions in Kilcawley Center, with a supplemental food pantry available.

"It was pretty boring because nobody was there," he said.

Many of Singh's friends chose not to return in the fall.

"Some because they don't feel safe enough to come back, some because they have underlying health conditions or their parents don't feel safe," he said. While a few chose to continue online, most took a gap year.

While Singh's parents used to worry, he now worries for them as COVID-19 cases rise in Nepal. Many countries, including Nepal, locked down, making loans and money transfers inaccessible.

"As an international student, you can't really get loans in the U.S. You have to get it back home, which is not possible right now," he said.

Trang Nguyen, sophomore finance major, lived in Cafaro house but made an emergency move to the Enclave apartments for three months in July.

"I had to stay in summer, [rent is] expensive. I don't have any relatives here," Nguyen said. "I had to ask my friend to take me to get groceries because the YSU shuttle bus shut down at the end of April."

Though the pandemic has improved in Hanoi, Vietnam, she worries about getting home to renew her visa for next year.

"According to my plan, I decided to maybe go back home this summer to renew my visa, but they shut everything down," Nguyen said. "So I'm worried about whether I can [go] back in winter or next summer."

My Le, senior business administration major, flew home to Vietnam when the pandemic heightened in the U.S. in March. Since she's graduating this spring, she returned to YSU to continue her degree. However, she still has concerns about fall.

"My biggest concern is protecting my own health. We can wear masks, but what if someone else isn't that concerned? My biggest concern is whether it is safe for me at school," Le said.

With students' home countries still on lockdown and students uncertain about how long campuses will remain open, international enrollment at YSU dropped this semester.

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